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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8429
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000533

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: STRONG GREEK REACTION TO MISSILE DEFENSE

REF: A. SECSTATE 21640

[1](#)B. ATHENS 386
[1](#)C. SECSTATE 30480
[1](#)D. ATHENS 532

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THOMAS COUNTRYMAN.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 22, the Greek MFA made a moderate statement in line with German statements noting that the Russian general's mischaracterizations of the MD program were unhelpful. Greek press reaction to the MFA's statement was swift and strongly negative. Much of the media followed the lead of left-of-center Eleftherotypia, which termed the missile program "Cold-Warrish" and claimed that Greece was the first allied country "to rush to reprimand" Moscow. Media also picked up and ran with Eleftherotypia's suggestion that the MFA's statement was "imposed" by the U.S. FM Bakoyannis was roundly criticized in the press, which also speculated on a rift between Bakoyannis and PM Karamanlis)- a development of which we have seen no real evidence. We have also seen little evidence that Greece's strong expression of support for the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism following our joint demarche with the Russian ambassador has stemmed the tide of negative press (ref d). END SUMMARY.

MD: &COLD-WARRISH8

[1](#)2. (C) Following demarche by Ambassador (ref b), the Greek MFA issued a moderate statement praising NATO-Russia dialogue and, in this context, characterizing the Russian CHOD's remarks on MD as unhelpful for further cooperation. Greek media reacted immediately with anger, both to the issue of Missile Defense and to the Greek MFA's statement on the Russian general. On February 22, left-of-center daily Eleftherotypia termed the missile program "Cold-Warrish" and claimed that Greece was the first allied country "to rush to reprimand" Moscow, while Germany took the middle road.

FM BAKOYANNIS UNDER FIRE

[1](#)3. (SBU) Other media outlets also picked up and ran with Eleftherotypia's suggestion that the MFA's statement was "imposed" by the U.S. Since then, stories have abounded in the media on all sides that the MFA's statement led to strained relations between Prime Minister Karamanlis and FM Dora Bakoyannis. On March 5, most media reported -- most likely at the FM's request -- that PM Karamanlis supported FM Bakoyannis, but left-of center Ethnos said in a front-page story that relations between Karamanlis and Bakoyannis &are on a tightrope8 and &Dora is having a nervous breakdown.8

¶4. (SBU) On March 6, under the headline &USA satisfaction with Dora,s rocket against Moscow,8 Eleftherotypia reproached Bakoyannis, in a full-page story, saying that her statement was in line with NSC guidelines, that she copied Secretary Rice's statement in Berlin in her attempt to &lock

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in8 her visit to Washington, that she wanted to undermine PM Karamanlis, recent overtures to &old Europe,8 and that she backed the Missile Defense issue as a distraction from Russian energy policy. The article concluded that Bakoyannis aligned herself with Washington without securing any exchanges from Washington, which &has proved for years now to be an unreliable partner, for Greece.8

¶5. (SBU) On March 7, pro-governing-party Eleftheros Typos reported that the Russian Ambassador's visit to PM Karamanlis the day before meant &the turbulence8 the MFA created with its statement on the Missile Defense issue had passed, while Eleftherotypia and Ethnos opined that the Russian Ambassador's visit to Karamanlis to talk about Putin,s visit meant FM Bakoyannis had been sidelined. On March 8, satirical, leftist Pondiki ran a cartoon showing a Russian spy talking via a transmitter to Putin: &President Putin, the Americans started a new Cold War in Greece. They installed a 'Dora' missile with a Mitsotakis warhead!8 On March 11, Bakoyannis appeared on Mega Channel's "Protagonistes" talk show and said, when asked, that Greece was not always in agreement with the U.S., citing Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as Iraq. Eleftherotypia said in its March 12 report that this was the first time that the MFA publicly admitted that Athens and Washington disagree on Kosovo.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The Greek MFA promptly fulfilled our request to make a statement on the Russian CHOD,s mischaracterization of the Missile Defense program, but it came at a high cost to FM Bakoyannis. Though quite moderate in tone, the statement hit a raw nerve with the Greek press. While we have seen no real evidence of a rift between Bakoyannis and PM Karamanlis over the substance of the issue, neither can be happy with the fallout. We don't believe the incident will cause serious damage in our relations with Greek officials, but it may make them wary about even moderate public expressions of support for U.S. positions on controversial issues. We are hopeful that the GoG's strong expression of support for the Statement of Principles of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism presages continued good cooperation (ref d).
COUNTRYMAN